

Sun
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¹⁰⁸ The Sun Editorial Mount Vernon & Lisbon: Consider 'Great Places'

This, indeed, is a great place to be in our state.

We refer, of course, to Mount Vernon and Lisbon.

Here, we say: Residents of our community, bind together to make this an official Great Place.

The background: In October, Gov. Tom Vilsack and Lt. Gov. Sally Pederson unveiled the Iowa Great Places initiative. It is a program "designed to promote bold thought, innovation and entrepreneurship to cultivate the unique and authentic qualities that make places in Iowa so special."

In practical terms, being named a Great Place results in a file cabinet full of experts to help a place improve; and new, more direct avenues to link with financial resources. (A slough of information can be found on the Internet at www.iowagreatplaces.gov.)

Three pilot Great Places will be chosen by an advisory board by Oct. 1, 2005.

We think Mount Vernon-Lisbon, as a pair, ought to work hard to be one of them.

It's important to note that this is not our idea. It's been floated by both the strategic planning committee (the group working to bind Lisbon and Mount Vernon) and the Mount Vernon revitalization group (now called Vision Mount Vernon, a group of dedicated citizens hoping to improve the look and economy of Mount Vernon). In fact, a group of citizens involved in the strategic planning committee attended a Great Places forum, which has led to plans to submit an application to the state by the July 1 deadline. And the Vision Mount Vernon group met last week with Great Places as a discussion item.

Given such work that's already been done, our message is not that we should vie for a Great Places designation.

Instead, we say: The entire Mount Vernon and Lisbon community – all facets, from those involved in formalized city governments to folks who have informal coffee shop conversations – should start talking about Great Places. Let's get a buzz going. Let's all decide this is worth pursuing. Let's all think and talk about how our great place can become even more great.

Why? Because after that application document is sent, we'll be assigned a coach to help us further work to become a Great Place. To put it simply, we need to be ready.

"But, wait!" you might say. "We're already a Great Place."

Indeed.

We have a "unique sense of place," "engaging experiences," a "rich social fabric," a "vital economy," a "pleasing environment," a "strong foundation," and a "creative culture" – the "dimensions" that will be used to determine the three inaugural Great Places.

Additionally, we've been constantly working on improvement





– readiness is also what the state will assess to determine the first three Great Places.

Most importantly, we’re always striving to be even better. The residents of our two towns – our combined community – want to be a greater great place.

For that reason alone, we should all strive to be an official Great Place.

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